

Budget Comments received after the City Manager's Proposed Budget

New Comments on Top

April 20, 2021

I have worked for the City for almost 35 years and feel that I have made a difference in the lives of older Alexandria residents and their families. I enjoy what I do and am grateful for the benefits received by the City. However, I feel that the City does not treat its employees equitably in terms of compensation, particularly those of us who have worked for the City for many years and are at the top of our pay scale. I would like to remind you what the City's Compensation Policy states, which is "The statement of compensation philosophy is intended to provide a broad framework for the City Council, management, employees and the citizens in order to understand and guide decisions that affect pay. It is designed to reflect the importance public employees play in the delivery of services and programs to the community; that compensation is a clear measure of that importance; and that there is fair and equitable treatment of all employees..." I don't feel that this policy is an accurate representation of the reality of what is proposed in the FY22 budget by not adding an additional step for general salary employees, nor has it been an accurate reflection for many years. For the past 8 years I have received only one step increase despite excellent annual evaluations. If no step increase is added in the upcoming budget that will be 9 years. Is this how the City Council chooses to show its most experienced employees how much they appreciate their service to Alexandria residents, particularly this past year? Although I am speaking for myself, I represent 20% of employees who are in the same situation. It is really disheartening to yet again be told that we are not deserving of a pay increase. We are your most experienced employees and you have relied on us time and time again, particularly this past year. I ask that you follow your own Compensation Philosophy and demonstrate that you value our work and will treat us equitably by adding an additional step to the general salary scale. I hope you do not choose to devalue our contributions to the City again.

April 12, 2021

According to the "City of Alexandria Proposed Budget in Brief for FY2022," the City Manager's Proposed Budget recommended a decrease in the current real estate tax rate from \$1.13 to \$1.11 per \$100 of assessed value but the City Council has authorized a rate of \$1.13 per \$100 of assessed value for purposes of advertising. At a minimum, the City should retain the Manager's proposed property tax rate of \$1.11 per \$100 of assessed value, if not consider even a lower rate, taking into account recent additional federal funding the City has received subsequent to the completion of the proposed FY2022 budget. Relatedly, reevaluation and reduction of assessed Stormwater Utility Fees should also be a consideration.

City Manager Mark Jinks presented the Alexandria City Council with the proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 General Fund Operating Budget of \$767.6 million on February 16, 2021.

Subsequent to this February 2021 presentation the City of Alexandria received \$59.4 million under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) enacted March 11, 2021 according to multiple reports. Reportedly the funds are to be provided in two equivalent allotments during 2021 and 2022 for use through Dec. 31, 2021, and permitted for use in response "...to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households...; or...the provision of government services to the extent of reduction in revenue...due to such emergency...; or To make necessary investments in water, sewer or broadband infrastructure." (Alexandria Gazette Packet, March 25-31, 2021, "Bulletin Board" p. 5).

Relatedly, on Feb. 16, 2021, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the awarding of \$321 million under the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) to Alexandria Renew Enterprises for its RiverRenew Tunnel System project. See EPA Feb. 16, 2021 Press Release at <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/search>.

According to the EPA's press release: "EPA's WIFIA loan will finance nearly half of the total project costs. The remaining project funds will come from a Virginia Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan, state grants, and cash contributions from AlexRenew on behalf of city residents and from Fairfax County. This WIFIA loan will save AlexRenew an estimated \$63 million."

The accompanying project fact sheet states the award "• Saves the City of Alexandria an estimated \$63 million from financing with a WIFIA loan." See: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2021->

[02/documents/alexrenew_wifiaprojectfactsheet_loanclose.pdf](#). I hope these factors will be taken into consideration in finalizing the FY2022 Budget and associated property tax rates and fees.

April 4, 2021

With the additional funding from the federal government, I strongly support funding for a new Green Building staff position in the FY22 budget for Planning & Zoning department. This was recommended by the Environmental Action Plan 2040 (action # 3.1.7), and the plan recommended the position to have started last year to cover many actions and goals that are implemented with "existing staff resources." The city acknowledged a Climate Emergency back in 2019, and I appreciate the City Manager's efforts to include funding for programs to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and also adapt to the extreme weather effects already occurring. The American Rescue Plan funds that the City will receive should hopefully free up budget resources to include the Green Building Staff position in FY22. Buildings accounted for 57% of the City's greenhouse gas emissions in the most recent inventory. Further City actions that go beyond the current Green Building Policy are needed to achieve our adopted climate targets, as identified in the EAP. This new staff position will be critical to implementing the multiple EAP green building actions slated for completion by FY23 (and beyond) and to helping the Energy and Climate Change Task Force formulate effective strategies for the buildings sector.

April 2, 2021

Please support funding for a new Green Building staff position, as identified in the City's Environmental Action Plan 2040 (action #3.1.7). This position is critical to implementing the multiple EAP green building actions slated for completion by FY23 and to helping the Energy and Climate Change Task Force formulate effective strategies for the buildings sector. All of these steps are needed to achieve the City's adopted climate targets, and the City has recognized the climate emergency in its October 2019 resolution. Thank you for funding climate change mitigation and resiliency measures elsewhere in the manager's budget proposal. Hopefully the American Rescue Plan aid can free up other funding in the budget to include the Green Building Staff position.

March 31, 2021

I would hope Council can find a way to re-implement the 1.5% proposed increase to the general schedule payscale that was approved and then removed due to COVID. Merit increases exclude 20-25% of the current workforce who are at the end of their paygrade. We internally hear about being a High Performing Organization. Do HPOs continually ignore 20-25% of their staff? Senior leadership in the City have offered a comment that maybe folks should look somewhere else if they can't go higher in the organization or if there are no pay increases for them. Again, not sure this is HPO. These tenured employees have come to work during COVID and are continually asked to train/supervise newer staff to accomplish our many missions within the City. Is there anyway to give them some opportunity to increase their pay?

March 26, 2021

I am writing as the advocacy director of the Washington Bicyclist Association. Our organization would like to thank you for investing in Thank them for continuing to invest in trails, complete streets and capital bikeshare. Alexandria still has a high rate of traffic crashes when compared to the rest of the region and Alexandria could benefit from investing in a long-term plan to create a protected bike network for Alexandria. Alexandria has seen a major increase in residents who are biking during the pandemic, and unless Alexandria seriously invests in a connected bike lane network, Alexandria will see a rise in traffic injuries. The budget should fund a long-term study to create a plan to implement a protected bike lane network for Alexandria.

February 24, 2021

In reference to Stormwater management in the Hunting Creek watershed. I did not see anything specific in the budget for working with Fairfax County to clean up Hunting Creek and prevent further pollution. There is a

complete automobile that has languished in Hunting Creek for over 11 years. Recently joined by two dumpsters, also floated off during heavy rains. Hunting Creek empties into the Potomac, which empties into the Chesapeake Bay. We spend tons of money cleaning up the Bay. It is the responsible and accountable action to provide for clean-up of Hunting Creek. Please include provisions in the 2022 budget to clean up this important waterway.

February 17, 2021

I applaud the city manager for preparing alternative revenue scenarios. Although as a property owner looking I'm looking at a 2nd consecutive year of a significant tax increase (due to appreciation of property value), I advocate for maintaining the tax rate at \$1.13 to expand the services the city operates. This can meet expanded needs of city residents and visitors, and model responsible fiscal behavior across the region.

February 16, 2021

I would like the budget to address my following concerns:

1. Energy and Climate Change Task Force (EAP 1.1.1, \$150,000 for consultant minus \$110,000 allocated FY2021, additional staff support time) – We request that the FY 2022 budget include funds to support the work of the Energy and Climate Change Task Force that will be fully operational in FY 2022.
2. Green Building New Staff Person (EAP 3.1.7, \$120,000 per year) – We request that you include funding for one full time green building staff person in the Department of Planning and Zoning as set forth under Section 3.1.7 of the EAP.
3. City Electric Vehicle Program funding (EAP 2.2.2, \$150,000 per year) – Implement recommendations of the new Alternative Fleet Fuel Policy and pilot programs for DASH, Alexandria City Public Schools, and the City vehicle fleet.
4. Tree Canopy Program and Guidelines (EAP 4.1.1, est. \$30-40,000 per year) – We request that funding to support achieving the tree canopy preservation goals be continued. This green infrastructure is critical for adapting to higher temperatures and rainfall events.